

**Sarhan, Sami. "An Interview With One of the Makers of the Intilqa".  
*Filasteen al-Thawra (Beirut), 1 January 1975. Translated by The Palestinian  
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"We Are Waiting for the Moon" is a beautiful image, a very transparent and accurate analogy.

"We Are Waiting for the Moon" is a beautiful song, replete with all manner of romantic expressions and connotations. It is sweet and delicate. It conveys all the waiting and resultant insomnia, preparation, anticipation and fortitude surrounding the encounter with the loved one, the ability to wait a long time for coming joy, and many more things. 'The moon' has always been used to describe beauty, light and loved ones. People often say 'beautiful as the moon' or 'full of hope like the moon'. 'The moon' was previously used exclusively by poets, artists, and those lost in love at a certain point in their lives. Today, the expression enters new avenues, where others use it, in addition to poets, lovers, and creators of literature and art. With the launch of the Palestinian revolution, the moon entered the vocabulary of the revolution.

"We Are Waiting for the Moon" was the content of the decisive message the general command of al-Asifah, which was awaiting it on pins and needles, received from Jerusalem. The message meant, "Everything is going well. We are waiting for the Dawn of 1 January 1965". The awaited moon was the loved one that anyone, having spent boundless time and effort, was yearning to welcome and embrace that "first minute of the first hour of the first day of 1965". The awaited moon was the dearest loved one, the beginning of revolutionary explosion, the beginning of the Palestinian armed revolution, and the beginning of the destruction of Zionist establishments that were built on attempts to destroy all human and cultural aspects of our Palestinian people.

After the two members of al-Asifah's and Fateh's general command tasked with supervising the launch had finished all the preparations and informed the leadership using "We Are Waiting for the Moon", they made the final arrangements for the Palestinian revolutionary explosion. It was decided that 82 Palestinian fighters from the vanguard – who, from today's standpoint, took on the responsibility of forging the history of Palestinian struggle – would take part in the First Intilqa.

The heroes were split up into 10 groups:

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1. Two groups directed towards Deir Nakhkhas.
2. Two groups directed towards the northern part of Palestine.
3. One group directed towards Beit Jibreen and Dura.
4. Two groups directed towards the Tulkarem area.
5. One group directed towards the Jerusalem area (Artouf).
6. Two group directed towards the southern part of Palestine.

They were armed with Sinopal, English Sten, English 303 rifle, a German rifle, mines, and improvised explosives made using gunpowder and TNT. All the fighters wore civilian clothes and brought their food supplies from home. Very few of them carried water bottles.

### *The First Operation*

To meet the “*awaited moon*” orders were issued to move two days before the dawn of 1 January 1965. This was meant to enable the groups to carry out final reconnaissance of their targets.

On the barren foothills to the east of al-Aroub plant nursery and on the shoulder of the road crossing the plain between the two mountains lies al-Aroub camp. It embraced the expanding valley that was wearing a green suit made of pine trees. Al-Aroub camp was under the tight security arrangements of the Hashemite regime. The security arrangements changed daily in anticipation to the potential confrontation between the representatives of the regime and the masses in al-Aroub. Despite all these arrangements when the darkness fell on 30 December 1964 and the camp’s residents went to sleep in their huts and tents four men under the cover of darkness and the bitter cold known in our country as al-“Aroub’s cold” started sneaking in the camp’s alleys. They whispered to each other “We don’t hate the land on which this camp was built. After all it’s our Palestinian land. We hate the state we live in, its political meaning and the threat this meaning poses to all Palestinian land and the entire Arab world. We hate the state we live in in the camp and the threat it poses on the human level. It is aimed at destroying the Palestinian individual. We hate and warn against the threat of this meaning on the future of the Palestinian people and the entire Arab nation. Therefore, it is our duty to leave this Palestinian land towards other Palestinian land to lay the foundations for our eventual return”.

They walked through the camp’s alleys until they reached the main road. Before they walked in the pine forest they bid the camp a farewell mixed with happiness rather than sadness. They prayed for happiness and joy for the

sleeping people. They walked deep into the green forest that was darker than the dark night outside it. When they left the forest they were welcomed by Beit Ummar valleys. The valleys hosted the last of the tomato and cauliflower crops. They walked between the crops for sometime until they reached the village where they turned onto the road leading to their target.

Abu Ibrahim (Ahmad Ibrahim al-Shamali) is a modest Palestinian fellah, a great man, and one of these four heroes.

Abu Ibrahim is a Palestinian fellah with deep belonging to Palestine, the Arab world and the Arab nation. He is a member of Harith tribe and lived in Idhna near Hebron where his ancestors were born. No one has ever heard that “any person, like all Palestinians, left Idhna it without ever returning from the days of al-Hawarith”.

Ahmad Ibrahim al-Shamali as he is known among the people in his village or Abu Ibrahim as he is known among his comrades in the forces of the Palestinian revolution is turning 50 years old at the time when the Palestinian revolution is turning 10. He is one the first people who made “the arrival of the moon” possible.

Somewhere in one of the Palestinian bases and before the car stopped brother (...), the commander of the military force the base and who was accompanying me, pointed to the right and said, “Look, uncle Abu Ibrahim is coming! You are very lucky. Even though I came here with you I was suspecting he would be on leave”.

The car stopped near the base in a hidden place. We walked toward the fighters and greeted them. They welcome us warmly. We talked about many subjects.

After drinking “Palestinian tea” I asked brother (...) to announce the nature of our visit. He smiled, cleared his throat and said, “Abu Ibrahim, your brother Sami would like to interview you for Filasteen al-Thawra issue for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Intilaqa”.

Immediately he answered, “Brother you know I can’t read or write. Ibrahim kindly reads Filasteen al-Thawra and the most important news in the other newspapers for me when I’m home. The fighters here or in the other military posts kindly read it for me. A man like can’t give an interview or anything like it. Even if I wanted to what can I say and how beneficial what I say would be”.

*While I was preparing my papers I intervened quickly, "Brother Abu Ibrahim, we came all the way here to interview you on the 10 year anniversary of the first operation you participated in. How was the operation carried out?"*

Abu Ibrahim fixed his Kufiya, changed the way he was sitting and then calmly said, "How beautiful are the days and the memories especially those when we were in our homeland and among our people. Please excuse me for being illiterate. I will talk and you can fix the language later on. The first operation I took part in was "water engine" in Umm al-Qutun near Deir Nakhkhas. We made the explosives in al-Aroub. It was made using gunpowder and TNT. The explosive device was a jerrycan and weighed around 8 kilograms. Since we only received basic training we doubted the effectiveness of the explosive device. We took a sample of the explosives and tested it in al-Aroub groves. You can't imagine how happy we were when we heard the explosion despite the risk of exposing us to the Jordanian regime.

"The great jerrycan" was moved from al-Aroub to Beit Ummar, to Meskah in Wadi al-Qaf, to Tarqoumia and finally to Idhna. Two days after the explosives were delivered we received the leadership's orders, through martyr Wadi', to blow up the water engine in Umm al-Qutun in two days on the night of 31 December.

Before sunset when the sun wore its golden yellow dress Um Ibrahim (Abu Ibrahim's wife) carried the jerrycan, pretending to go to the spring to fetch water, and dropped it at the launching point.

Brothers Abdel Aziz Jubran, the late Wadi', and Musa Mahmoud and I started around 9 in the evening on 31 December 1964. We walked on Beit Allam road and from there to Wadi Abu al-Khail, to Khallet Na'jah which located on the lands of Deir Nakhkhas, to Deir Nakhkhas, to Umm al-Qutun where the water engine, the target of the operation, was located. Wadi Sa'ir separates between Deir Nakhkhas and Umm al-Qutun.

We reached the target. The engine's room was closed and Khallet Umm al-Qutun was sleeping and dreaming in the peaceful night. Silence was heavy in the area. The engine was surrounded by a big number of fuel barrels. We planted the jerrycan and attached a one-meter long slow fuse to it and connected it to the detonator. We lit the fuse.

Our hearts started beating violently while "*we waited for the moon*". We were afraid that it wouldn't explode despite the experiment we carried out. Despite

the bitter cold the temperature of our bodies increased. A cub of tea at that time would have been really great. We had to eat an extra amount of dates, that UNRWA distributed in the camp, to combat the cold. The hours of waiting seemed lethal even though we scouted the place many time”.

Two of us stood outside the room on guard while the other two planted the explosive device. We needed to plant the explosives on the first minute of the first hour of the first day of the first month of 1965. 15 minutes of the most critical in my life passed. The building was destroyed. Fire consumed the building, the engine and the fuel barrels. The explosion was so loud that Umm Ibrahim, was waiting for her man, and many more in Idhna heard it (they told us so when we returned).

With the sound of the explosion our history marked the Intilqa. At that moment the masses of our Palestinian people scattered in every land in wretchedness and refugeeness away from the homeland were sleeping after another day of misery waiting for a new day. The night, however, carried the elements of a new dawn.

When we heard the explosion we flew in the air not knowing if it was because of joy or because of the explosion. We left one position in the homeland for another position. On the way back we saw enemy vehicles driving from Beit Jibreen to Deir Nakhkhas shooting heavily in the valleys and on the mountains. Other vehicles drove rapidly from Umm al-Qutun towards the engine.

We continued our journey back feeling very happy and optimistic. The only people in the village who knew what we did were the four of us, another two men and Umm Ibrahim. In the morning we joined the people of Idhna wondering about the explosion at midnight. Wadi’, may he rest in peace, said, “Perhaps they are training!”

This was the first operation and this is how the Intilqa took place. With the same mechanism, means and capabilities the revolution started and still continues “in spite of those who like it and those who don’t”.

*Brother Abu Ibrahim as one of the makers of Intilqa, when, how and why did you join Fateh?*

I can’t read or write and that’s why I don’t know the exact date I joined the movement. Joining the national work doesn’t need any reasons. It is true I’m an educated man, but I know I can’t ask someone why they are patriotic or

why did they become one. The most important thing is I had the honour of joining Fateh at a very early stage.

*He continued:*

Some of the brothers, especially brother (...), knew to some extent I was a patriot or that I loved my country and my people. He briefed me secretly about an organization that later on I found out it was Fateh. I liked the idea and from that day I became a member of Fateh.

*Did you participate in any other operations?*

Yes. In the same month Abdel Aziz and I blew up al-Dawayima Bridge near Qbiabet Bani Awwad. We used a fuse, a detonator and a mine. During this operation a strange incident took place. While we were planting the explosives we discovered that the fuse was broken. We were shocked. What could we do especially that historic responsibility demanded we carry out the operation. We carried out this mission despite the limited equipment. "When found out that the fuse was broken we went up the mountain and collected firewood. We lit the fire after we put the wood around the mine, the fuse and the detonator. We withdrew to Abu Ja'ed groves, which is around 2 kilometers away. We waited for more than 40 minutes before the mine exploded and destroyed the bridge,"

The explosion was very loud in the quiet of the night. Zionist vehicles drove from al-Dawayima to the bridge. They used floodlights to light the area and started shooting in all directions without aiming.

These two operations, not because I took part in them, are considered part in a series of operations that were carried out according to a plan to announce the Intilqa. They are shining moments in the road to formulate the path of the Palestinian revolution.

In the beginning of the revolutionary work we felt great tranquility after carrying out an operation. Before carrying out any operation we doubted the effectiveness of the weapons we had especially against an enemy like Israel. When we saw our actions, despite our modest weapons (mines, Schmeisser, Carl Gustav, and....) made such an impact we started believing that we can affect the enemy.

Brother Ahmad, while you are going through the memories, which now belong to our people's revolutionary history, what can you add?

Our conversation is melancholic and the memories are many. Talking about all the memories will take a very long time. I remember in the first month of the revolution martyr Wadi' brought us orders to attack a vital target in the occupied territories. We conducted several reconnaissance missions of the target. We discovered that a military half-track vehicle drives everything on the road to set ambushes between Beit Jibreen and Deir Nakhkhas. Musa, Abdel Aziz and I decided to ambush it to the east of Beit Jibreen near al-Moghitiyah. Because of bad luck the vehicle was late. Brother Musa suggested we move to Deir Nakhkhas to ambush it there the next night. We thought the vehicle passed before we set up the ambush. When stood up to leave the ambush the patrol surprised us.

"We were standing in the middle of the road and despite that we discussed what to do. The distance between the vehicle and us was short. We leaned to one side and hid in a wide crack which a half or a third of it was in the road. The vehicle was now close to us. What should we do? Brother Musa wanted to start shooting at it immediately but I stopped him. The light was in our faces and I suggested waiting until the vehicle was next to us. When the distance between us was one meter brother Musa was already in the middle of road shooting. Abdel Aziz and I started shooting as well. There was a bend on the road and the half-track rolled over. We continued shooting at it and then threw a Mills grenade at it. We escaped certain death and managed to kill the enemies as well.

*What happened after that?*

Before he answered my question I looked around and everyone was listening attentively. It was like they never hear the stories before. Later on I found out that they heard parts of these stories.

Abu Ibrahim sat straight, took off his kufiya and said:

After that I received a written order from the leadership to move from Idhna to al-Aroub to live there permanently. This was intended to divert attention away from me in the town. I had to come up with a reason why I was moving to al-Aroub. I worked in a small restaurant to cover my patriotic and national activity while at the same time earn a living. An agent of the King's mukhabarat passed in front of the restaurant everyday. He would slowdown in front of the restaurant and stare at passersby. I discovered who he was and informed the brothers. It was decided I should move to Beit Rima near Ramallah. There I worked in harvesting olives. Organizationally I worked

with a person from Beit Rima. Because the organization was clandestine I wrote a letter to brother (Abu....) informing him of my new address. Three days later while I was harvesting olives and really tired I was surprised to find brother (Abu...) saying hello. I looked up and I was really shocked when I say it was him. I asked if everything was ok. He said everyone was arrested and that they were searching for me. He said that they circulated information about me to the entire northern region. I was really upset and went to see a friend of mine in Ein Arik. The next day I went to Ramallah, then to Jerusalem and from there to Kfra Atsion where I got off. I entered the groves around al-Aroub and asked one of the brothers living at the edge of al-Aroub to send for a member of my family to ask them about the situation. I waited and then I saw my wife coming up the mountain. I asked her about the organization and about Musa, Abdel Aziz and the others. She said they were all arrested.

*Before he continued I asked him: Were you eventually arrested?*

They arrested me in late 1965 and I was taken to al-A'marah (Hebron Prison). There they asked to tell them where the weapons are but I denied knowing. They asked me if I was a member of Fateh and if I had any weapons but I denied that as well. They transferred me blindfolded to Amman. There were other prisoners with me in the vehicle. Later on I found out they were members of Fateh. They dropped us at al-Mukhabarat building in al-Abdali. There I recognized brothers Abu Ramzi and Jaber. They started torturing us and then they sent me in to see the officer. He started by saying "My son, don't follow their lead. They are spies and they will drag you to the bottom. Tell us everything you know and we will give you money and send you home tonight".

What do you think I told him?

I told him that the homeland and the people are bigger than being sold and more precious than money. "I'm a modest fella and I don't know anything". He started beating me.

They detained us in solitary confinement. While I was in the cell all I heard anything except screams. "Brother, we suffered greatly at the hands of the King's mukhabarat".

Two days later I was taken for interrogation. The room was full with regime officers. Among them were the traitors Ahmed Ebidat, Rajai al-Dajani and other traitors. The traitor Ebidat asked with vileness and wickedness, "Are you a member of Fateh?" I answered, "No". He repeated his question and I

gave him the same answer. He started beating me. The traitors Rajai al-Dajani and Qasem Farayyah joined him beating me. When I regained consciousness it was late at night and I was back in the cell.

This continued for 29 days. I was beaten everyday but I didn't confess to anything despite them confronting me with some information.

My health deteriorated and the beatings became less. They replaced it with swearing at me and scolding me.

One day the traitor Rajai al-Dajani summoned me and asked me about my property, my children, and my relatives. Then he asked me about the traitor (Ahmad....) who was recruited to work against Fateh. I denied knowing who he was. He slapped me and swore at me with vilest swearwords. He then called for a soldier and told him, "Take this animal that doesn't know what's in his interest away".

I was taken back to the cell and less than an hour later I was summoned once again. The traitors started pretending to be kind to me. Then they brought the traitor Ahmad into the room and asked me if I knew him. I denied and I swore by god I didn't know him.

After that I was taken to Zarqa prison. They put me in a cell where I found all the people I knew in Fateh, except very few, there. After spending one month in Zarqa prison we were transferred to al-Jafr prison. We stayed in that prison, along with the Palestinian and Jordanian national progressive forces, until the second day of the June 1967 war. We returned to the homeland during the war in the hope of participating in its defence. We arrived at the time the homeland was handed over to the Zionists. After that I returned to the village and visited all the locations where the brothers were active. Then I decided to contact the leaders of our movement and placed myself at the disposal of the revolution until today.

*Brother Abu Ibrahim, after such a long journey in the struggle, being pursued, and imprisoned by the traitors as well as the revolutionary work you witnessed from the first bullet until now, what do you feel as one of the first fighters in the revolution while you the PLO achieving all these victories on many enemies and in many arenas?*

I don't know how can the victorious ask himself about his victory. I feel the same you and every Palestinian who loves his country and his people do. It's

the same way every person for his cause and liberation in the Arab world and in the entire world feels.

“Brother, honestly I’m happy and victorious. Who can believe that since the jerrycan we became a big revolution with many and varied weapons; from a revolution to entering the United Nations; and from entering the United Nations to complete recognition of our right to have a state for our people by the entire world. I thank god that our revolution grew bigger and stronger. Today we appear in the UN General Assembly and we have many friends. The blood of the martyrs wasn’t wasted. Fathers can be proud of their martyred sons. With time it was confirmed more and more that our martyrs died for a cause for their people. Zionism and Israel were defeated by our revolution, our people and the friendly masses in the world. It started with the jerrycan, colonialism and the kind surrounding our people and preventing them from carrying arms. We overcome all the difficulties and obstacles and struggled to reach these results and achieve part of the victory. Who can stop us from entering Palestine? Who can stop us from liberating the other parts? The path we walked delivered us to the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. We will continue on this path and it will bring us to liberating all of Palestine. Write this down so that people who are not prepared to understand can understand.

I bid brother Abu Ibrahim and the other fighters farewell, astonished by this struggler’s resilience and his readiness to continue the revolutionary work. I bid him farewell admiring the level of his awareness and his extraordinary experience in the struggle at such an age.

I bid him farewell while, thinking to myself ‘the revolution that achieved all these victories can only continue until liberation and victory’.